

## Summary of Consensus Issues in Downtown Nashua

### Downtown Surveys and March 30 Public Meeting

#### Parking Issues

Parking in Downtown Nashua is a major issue. Providing adequate, convenient and safe parking is critical to creating an environment that will attract shoppers, diners and workers to Downtown Nashua. Major issues include:

- Location of parking facilities: While there is an ample amount of parking currently located in Downtown Nashua, it is not all located immediately next to the front door of a store or business. There may be limited opportunities to add more spaces on Main Street, which may help to maximize the amount of convenient, short-term parking.
- Poor signage to off-street lots and garages: Signs that direct visitors to the ample off-street parking facilities are limited, which often causes visitors to “circle the block,” increasing traffic on downtown roadways.
- Parking management policies do not maximize the use and turnover of on-street spaces. Currently, it costs the same amount to park at high demand on-street spaces as it does to park at off street lots and garages. As a result, visitors continue to “circle the block” in order to find an on-street space next to a store, increasing traffic and limiting the turnover at high demand spaces. Also, parking time limits are not uniformly enforced, which has the effect promoting meter-feeding. Lack of meter rates in the evening and on Saturday causes on-street spaces to fill with long-term parkers.

#### Shopping and Dining Issues

Nashua has a reputation as an attractive “main street” shopping district with excellent dining options. There is a concern that Downtown Nashua is losing its competitive edge to nearby big-box shopping areas, on-line retailers and especially, other “main street” districts such as Portsmouth and Lowell, MA. Issues related to shopping and dining include:

- Potential customers of Downtown Nashua perceive it as a shopping destination with limited shopping options, especially ones that appeal to those seeking affordability.
- The hours of operation for Downtown Nashua stores do not match the times customers most often shop, particularly on evenings, Saturdays and Sundays. As a result, Downtown Nashua merchants lose customers and Downtown Nashua is less vibrant during these times.

- Store hours are not consistent among Downtown Nashua merchants. As a result, Downtown Nashua loses customers to neighboring shopping areas that have predictable, consistent and uniform store hours.

#### Downtown Appearance Issues

Major investments in Downtown Nashua's street and sidewalk infrastructure from the late 1970s are starting to show some wear. Long term maintenance of the public spaces and many buildings has been deferred, preventing Nashua from showing its "best face" and attracting the many visitors who travel down Main Street. Issues related to the appearance of Downtown include:

- Downtown Nashua is not always clean: many areas of Downtown Nashua are subject to littering, vandalism and a general unkempt condition.
- The presence of pan-handlers is a growing problem in Downtown Nashua. Visitors are routinely approached by pan-handlers, which creates negative impression.
- The once beautiful, brick sidewalks of Downtown Nashua are in poor condition in many places, creating a hazard to pedestrians and poor impression among many current and potential visitors.
- A number of buildings and storefronts need upgrades. While there are many attractive storefronts and handsome historic buildings in Downtown Nashua, many storefronts look dated, lack character, or are poorly maintained.
- Lighting in Downtown Nashua is insufficient and inappropriate for pedestrians. Most of the lighting along Main Street shines on the roadway only. Where pedestrian-scaled lighting exists, it is inadequate to make visitors feel safe and secure.
- The side streets of Downtown Nashua suffer from poor visibility and receive little attention from visitors: one-way streets, poor lighting and limited signage contribute to the situation.
- There are an increasing number of vacant storefronts in Downtown Nashua. This creates the appearance that Downtown Nashua is struggling.

#### Traffic Issues

Main Street is currently designed to move high volumes of traffic, primarily through Downtown Nashua. While Downtown benefits from this high visibility from drivers, the design does not promote and support pedestrian activity to the fullest potential. Specific Issues include:

- Portions of Downtown Nashua feel unsafe for pedestrians. Inadequate lighting between Main Street and the parking garages, traffic lights that are too short for pedestrian crossing and winter snow banks all contribute to an unsafe or unwelcoming pedestrian experience.
- Downtown Nashua is “bike-unfriendly” and dangerous. Bicyclists must be wary of fast cars and doors opening into too-narrow bike lanes. Serious bike accidents do occur—even police officers on bike patrol in Downtown Nashua ride illegally on the sidewalk in order to avoid vehicular traffic
- Traffic moves too fast through Downtown Nashua. This creates a safety hazard for pedestrians crossing five lanes of traffic on Main Street and creates loud noise which discourages some sidewalk dining.
- Significant traffic backups occur during the morning rush hour and in the evening.

#### Vitality Issues

A sustainably lively downtown environment will require more shoppers, visitors and workers. A lively downtown will support thriving retail and restaurants and create an environment that people want to experience. Issues that threaten the vitality of Downtown Nashua include:

- Limited amount of housing in Downtown Nashua. The conversion of empty upper story buildings and mill buildings near Downtown Nashua into housing opportunities will create vitality in Downtown that lasts virtually 24 hours a day. The housing that exists today is limited in its ability to attract residents from all income levels.
- Limited schedule of special events. Some of Nashua’s signature special events attract tens of thousands of people to experience Downtown Nashua. A year-round, comprehensive program of events and promotions will increase excitement and vitality in Downtown Nashua.